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אביר 1 Sam. 21 8

One hears nowadays that אביר in 1 Sam. 21 8 has superlative adjectival sense, "the mightiest of" &c. But if Doeg was the mightiest of either Saul's herdsmen or Saul's guardsmen the mention of the fact would stand unmotivated in the text. And if such had been the meaning the words would have been אביר רעי שאול; the use of the periphrastic genitive shows that we are speaking not of the אביר of Saul's רעים but of Saul's אביר רעים. So this text cannot be an exception to the rule that אביר is substantive; and presumably אביר רעים is some sort of office. I conjecture that with large herds like the king's there was so much specialization of function that one man was engaged as the fighting man of the company, whose chief qualifications were willingness to fight at any moment and ability to kill any number of robbers or lions. Such a character would suit the part that Doeg plays.

Ballard Vale, Mass.

Steven T. Byington

נרנלות

Surely the interpretation "bannered hosts" for נרנלות is, as Graetz says, mere conjecture. But if we are to conjecture, the parallelism in Cant. 6 10 bids us conjecture rather a celestial luminary. There are two luminaries which the tradition of the world recognizes as "terrible" and which would be appropriately named by a plural word meaning "bannered": (a) the aurora borealis, (b) comets. History records that there have been times when the aurora borealis has appeared conspicuously in the latitude of Palestine often enough to be likely to have a name given to it; that it has not appeared very often is just what is wanted, for this is what makes it "terrible". On the other hand, I believe every nation which has observed comets has observed that comet differs from comet and hence that they are to be spoken of in the plural. I should regard either of these interpretations as convincing if it had not the other to compete with it; at any rate I see no occasion for considering any third interpretation.

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